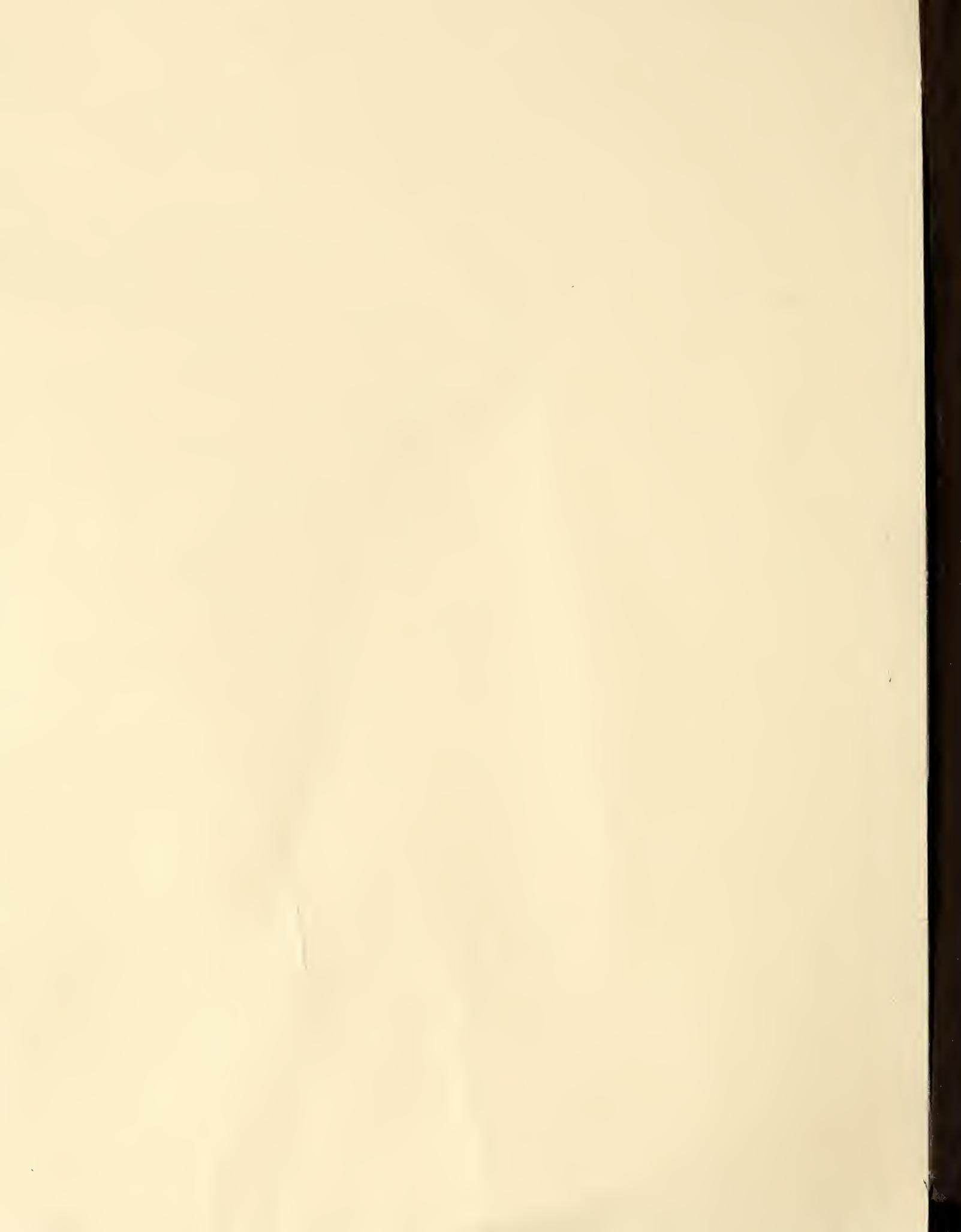


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INSTRUCTIONS IN INTERVIEWING

(OUTLINE FOR USE IN DISCUSSION AT A TRAINING SESSION FOR INTERVIEWERS)

I. Importance of Good Interviewing.

A. Two Common Ways to Collect Information.

1. Send out mail questionnaires.

a. Some disadvantages.

- (1) Frequently many not returned; the ones returned may not represent sample.
- (2) Many incomplete answers.
- (3) Others.

2. Personal interviews with people.

B. Many Sources of Error in Studies.

1. Questions may be poorly worded and confusing.

a. Cite examples.

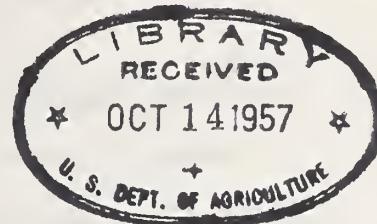
2. May not involve a representative cross-section of the population to be studied.

3. Mistakes in tabulating the information.

4. Errors from interviewing.

a. Very common according to "experts."

- (1) Questions omitted.
- (2) Answers not recorded or misinterpreted.
- (3) Answers biased or influenced by interviewer.
 - (a) As where interviewer changes wording of question or suggests an answer.
- (4) Families not interviewed.
 - (a) Can mean that sample doesn't give a true picture of area.
 - (b) Example: Omitting people who are not at home, or those on back roads, etc.



Prepared by Ward F. Porter and Mrs. Jewell Fessenden, Division of Extension Research and Training, for use in Extension Summer Schools, 1956.

b. Can be greatly reduced or eliminated thru:

- (1) Having interviewers with an interest in study.
- (2) Training.
 - (a) A "right" way to interview as in operating a milking machine, tractor, or sewing machine.

C. Three Main Stages in Interviewing.

1. Making an approach and gaining person's confidence and interest.
2. Accurate recording of information.
3. Closing the interview.
4. Careful editing of each schedule after interview.
 - a. Increases efficiency of study.
 - b. Great help to tabulators.

II. Setting the Stage for the Interview.

A. Gaining Acceptance.

1. A good interview depends on a feeling of trust and confidence.
2. Be friendly and at ease.
 - a. Very few people who don't respond to good interviewers.
 - (1) Don't be easily discouraged about gaining immediate acceptance.
3. Show an interest in person.
 - a. Develop common interests.
 - (1) In livestock, barn, children, etc.
 - (2) Almost always something you can comment favorably about.
 - (3) Must be sincere, however.
4. Be sympathetic and understanding.
 - a. Doesn't mean agreeing with person on opinions, answers, etc.
5. Be a good listener.
 - a. Encourage person to talk about himself, etc.

B. Making the Introduction.

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1. Identify yourself.
 - a. Your name.
 - b. Indicate your connection with the study as an interviewer only.
 - (1) Do not associate yourself with the planning of the study.
 - c. Example: "My name is John Doe. I'm helping the _____ County Agricultural Development Council and the County Extension Office on an important survey of the county. You may have read about it in the newspaper."
 - d. Show identification if necessary.
2. Explain purpose of the study.
 - a. To collect some facts about the problems, needs, and interests of all rural people in County.
 - (1) For the county planning group and the County Extension Office.
 - b. The information may help to plan a program to help meet the needs of the people.
3. Explaining how the person was selected.
 - a. This need not be in detail, unless asked for.
 - b. A general statement is all that's necessary.
 - (1) Impossible to talk with everyone.
 - (2) Important to talk with all kinds of people.
 - (3) Areas, segments of land, or people selected.
 - (a) Explain "like drawing names out of a hat", etc.
4. Indicate confidential nature of information.
 - a. Respect respondent's confidence.
5. Handling rejections.
 - a. Very few refusals to be expected.
 - (1) Most people like to talk if right approach is made.

b. Some possible explanations of "threatened refusals."

- (1) Not sure of purpose of your visit.
 - (a) Explain purpose.
- (2) No time to talk at the moment.
 - (a) Arrange for another time.
- (3) Respondent may feel incompetent or shy.
 - (a) Make respondent feel that his cooperation is important.

c. Some general suggestions.

- (1) Remain calm and friendly, and have patience.
- (2) Explain need for information.

6. Try to carry on interview in private.

- a. Presence of outsiders might embarrass or influence answers.

III. Asking the Questions.

A. Some General Rules.

1. Ask each question exactly as worded.

- a. Otherwise, may change meaning of question.

- b. Might otherwise bias answer.

- (1) Easy for anyone to do without realizing it.

- c. Examples.

2. Watch for instructions.

3. Ask each question that applies to person being interviewed.

4. Ask questions in order.

- a. Otherwise, answers to one question may be influenced by answers to another.

- b. Also, question may not be understood.

5. Use as informal and conversational a manner as possible.

- a. Requires thorough knowledge of the questionnaire.

- (1) Should read it aloud to yourself or someone else several times.

J. Getting Adequate Answers.

A. Meaning of Adequate.

1. An answer which is complete, clear, and specific.
2. An answer directly related to the question.

B. Types of Inadequate Answers.

1. Some are vague.
 - a. Examples.
2. Some are only partial answers.
 - a. Examples.
3. Some are too general and not specific.
 - a. Examples.
4. Some indicate lack of understanding of the question.
 - a. Should reread question slowly.
 - b. Example

C. Probing

1. Meaning.
 - a. Anything said by the interviewer to get additional information.
 - b. Some good and some not so good.
 - (1) Probes may bias the answer or antagonize the person.
 - (a) Examples.
2. Methods of probing.
 - a. An expectant pause on part of interviewer.
 - (1) Conveys idea that you want person to continue his answer.
 - (2) Allows time for the person to think thru his answer.
 - b. Assenting comments.
 - (1) "Uh-Huh," "Yes?" "I see," "That's interesting."
 - (2) Should not involve or imply personal agreement (or disagreement).
 - c. Repeating the question.
 - (1) Always safe.

d. Other probing comments.

- (1) "How is that?"
- (2) "How do you mean?"
- (3) "How so?"
- (4) "Anything else."

e. Avoid probes that suggest answers.

- (1) Example.

V. Recording the Interview.

A. General Suggestions.

- 1. Write legibly.
- 2. Make sure checks are in right spaces.
- 3. Write down any comments on margin or back of page, particularly those which help to explain unusual answers.
 - a. Helps in interpreting answers.
 - b. Flatters person if properly handled.

VI. Closing the Interview.

A. General Comments.

- 1. Try to leave person feeling friendly toward interviewer, Extension Service, etc.
- 2. Do not promise any personal gain for the respondent.
- 3. Express thanks for his help.
- 4. If requests are made for information or literature, be sure to inform Extension office.

VII. Editing the Questionnaire.

A. General Comments.

- 1. To catch any omissions.
- 2. To make sure writing is legible.
- 3. To make sure all questions are answered or coded for no reply ("N.R." or refusal ("R").

